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KATRINA KAIF

WOMEN IN INDIA

https://youtu.be/63u_9rPDSeM

Speech 1

Be as a world we strive to achieve by 2030. I was fortunate enough to play a small role in the announcement in India for the same along with Akshay Kumar, A.R. Rahman and Mrs. Tina Ambani. It is an ambitious proposal and a tough one to achieve in 14 years, but I do believe that we can achieve this if we all sincerely try together. I'm sure many of you are aware that India had a woman as her head of state way before the United Kingdom, a feature the United States of America has not managed to achieve as of yet. Which is why it is surprising to hear about gender inequality here in India. And yet sadly, we do. On a daily basis, there are shocking stories in the media about violent crimes committed against women. Yet, I can only imagine how many more crimes there are against women in India that go unreported. This is not an India specific issue though. In the UN Secretary General's 2006 report, on an in-depth study, on all forms of violence against women, it was noted that there is no region of the world, no country, no culture in which women's freedom from violence has been secured.

Here is another fact. In India, according to data provided by the National Crime Records Bureau, in the year 2001, the reported crimes against women were 1,43,795. In the year 2005, the reported crimes were 3,27,394; more than a 100% increase in numbers. However, I would like to believe that this increase in numbers is not an increase in crime against women; it is an increase in the number of women who are ready to come forward and report them.

The world has largely been led by patriarchal societies and women have, through the years, largely remained quiet in the face of atrocities, rather than speak out against them. I know of educated women who remain silent in the face of violence because they are afraid to confront societal norms and have fingers pointed in their own direction. Especially when the majority of our society fails to recognize marital rape as a crime. I would urge more women to speak out. It is not okay to feel inferior or weak because we are not the weaker sex by any stretch of imagination. We may be more emotional, but that is what makes us caregivers and mothers. If you ask each person sitting here today, who is the strongest person that they know in their lives, I think the unanimous answer would most likely be that it is their mother. As it is in my case. My mother is by far the most amazing woman I have ever known. And as I stand here on this platform, if I do not act and merely speak, I would be doing my mother and every woman in the world a huge disservice. I would therefore like to pledge today, that I will do whatever I can in my capacity to create awareness about gender equality. Thank you very much.

Speech 2

Katrina, I just read the audience's mind and they're telling me, "Step aside Rena, we're dying to hear Katrina." Over to you.

Good evening. Good afternoon, everybody. Firstly, I'd like to thank all our extremely distinguished guests who I'm having the privilege, thank you, of sitting alongside this afternoon. Thank you very much for the honor of inviting me here. Very happy to be here.

There's just a few things that I would like to say. Firstly, I believe the world of cinema, not only Indian cinema, is often called a man's world. It is changing, but the change is slow. So, I believe it's a matter of great pride that we have an award that acknowledges and recognizes the contribution of women to cinema. This award honors the memory of one of the greatest and the most accomplished actors, whose roles served as an inspiration in the lives of millions of women. As an actor, the love of the people is the biggest reward of all. But when there is recognition from the industry, in the form of an award, for me it's very overwhelming. I believe the most important thing in art is truth. And I can promise that my attempt is truthful and sincere to the craft which has largely given me my purpose in life over the last few years. The one thing I do hope is that I can continue to make the audience who has given me so much love and support over these last few years, I hope that I can continue to make them proud of me and to deserve their support and their love, as they has always given me. I'd like to thank the jury for this recognition and I'd like to accept this award on behalf of every woman who seeks to excel in her field of work. I read something very interesting that I thought was very beautiful. It is said that women hold up half the sky. And I think it is woman like Smitaji, who show us that not even the sky is the limit. So I'd like to thank you all very much for this award. It's a pleasure being here this afternoon. Thank you.

Speech 3

And Katrina, your mother has been... she's had a great impact on you. And I believe that she's also been a part of lot of social causes, right? So what has the influence been on you, how has she impacted you in your life?

Well, I think I have the most wonderful example of when it comes to, you know, taking up social causes in the correct way with my mother. My mother from the last, well, long as I can remember, has always been involved in charitable causes, different charitable causes. But as of the last few years, she has been working, which you know, I have spoken about a bit on my social platform, she's been working with this amazing school, which she's built from the ground up, called Mount View School, and this is in Madurai. And the thing that's so wonderful about the school is the teachers, everyone involved in it is actually from the local community trained by her, because she is a teacher. And I guess that's where for me, the personal connect with this charity really happened with Educate Girls. So, when Safeena contacted me about Educate Girls; we do get a lot of people contacting us to be very honest, because any cause, any charitable organization, they need that voice for the exact reason which Safeena just said, which is that you do get a lot of doors slammed in your face when you're trying to change the mindset.

See there are... It's not just about the tangible resources. It's not just about the physical resources. It's about changing the mindset of the people who don't see the importance of sending their girls to school, who don't have the mindset that boys and girls are equal. And that still, although we may hear in the metros, and especially now it's become, you know, we hear a lot of talk about it, about equality and in

our world. That's not necessarily what life is like, in what we would call rural India, in the interiors of India. It's that maybe just because we're seeing and talking about amongst ourselves; it's a great place to start. But what Safeena is actually doing is on the grass root level, from the ground up. She's going into the communities with her team, with Team Balika. Not going and saying this is what I think. So this is the right way and trying to enforce her or our opinion; where I'm sure everyone in this room is of the opinion that, you know, girls must be educated. That every child must have an education. But she's trying to first go and talk to them in a way that they will understand, not be told what to do. Whether it's the village leaders, the village elders, the parents. Getting people who often are the most educated girls or the most educated boys from the local communities to join Team Balika, who then go into that community. So where they're... it's not unknown like Safeena. It's someone from their community saying, "Aunty, you know, can we talk to you for a minute?" or someone who's recognizable to them. And saying these are the reasons and these are the benefits that you must send your daughter to school.

Although it sounds on many levels like this is, you know, starting again from the basics. This is still, this is still what is happening. And this is still what we, in my opinion, is the number one, the number one thing to address and that is for me, everything starts with education. Knowledge is power and when you have that power, you have self-confidence, you have belief in yourself, you then can become empowered to start even thinking about what you want. Today, the girl which Safeena's talking about, today she wants to be a teacher. But she knows she wants to be a teacher because she has that education. Without education, she might not even know what she wants. She might not even have that self-awareness to start thinking about what she wants.

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